



## **FINAL MINUTES**

### **COMMITTEE FOR PURCHASE FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR SEVERELY DISABLED**

Thursday, January 14, 2010  
Arlington, VA  
9:00 am

Mr. Andrew Houghton, Committee Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 9:10 am. Chairperson Houghton wished everyone a Happy New Year and then he asked everyone to pause to commemorate the tragic earthquake in Haiti. Following the moment of silence, in accordance with Committee practice, the attendees introduced themselves.

Mr. Houghton commented that Ms. Kathleen Martinez, Department of Labor/ODEP, planned to join the meeting, but was called away for another meeting with the First Lady. Mr. Houghton said he looks forward to working with Ms. Martinez.

#### **I. Consideration of the Minutes – October 22, 2009**

Mr. Houghton asked Ms. Angela Phifer, Committee Executive Assistant, if there were any changes to the October 22, 2009 minutes. She said there were no changes. Mr. Abram Claude, Private Citizen, made a motion that the minutes be accepted. His motion received a second from Mr. James Omvig, Committee Vice Chairperson, and the minutes were adopted by unanimous vote.

#### **II. QWE Brief**

Mr. John Miller, Chair of the Quality Work Environment (QWE) Implementation Group and Mr. Robert Hanye, Vice Chair of the QWE, briefed the Committee on the QWE Initiative. Mr. Miller is the CEO of Goodwill Industries in Southeastern Wisconsin. The group met in February and March 2009, following the program-wide distribution of the memorandum sent by the Executive Director establishing the QWE initiative. Ms. Ballard charged the CNAs with collaborating with the Committee staff and NPAs to identify and implement employer best practices to enhance the quality of the work environment for AbilityOne employees.

Mr. Miller said the group met in April for a two-day meeting. He said Ms. Ballard's interaction with the group was instrumental in the collaboration process. First, Mr. Miller discussed the Committee's vision and QWE guiding principles that were referenced in Ms. Ballard's first letter. Work teams were established which consisted of a Steering Group and four subcommittees. The teams had representation from NPAs, NIB, NISH, and outside subject matter experts.

The group met for two days and developed four broad components which were assigned to each subcommittee.

**Subcommittee #1:**

Practice Guidelines in enhancing wages via productivity and/or other means

**Subcommittee #2:**

Practice Guidelines in creating opportunities both within and outside a participant's current employer, including person centered plans based upon informed choice

**Subcommittee #3:**

Practice Guidelines in creating access to and/or navigation toward services/support/training/skill acquisition

**Subcommittee #4:**

Practice Guidelines in providing supports and flexibilities in the work environment

Mr. Miller said the Steering Group defined three working assumptions to guide their work:

- Do no harm
- Recognize the realities of and readiness for change among:  
The NPAs, CNAs, Committee  
The job, economic and business markets  
The consumers being served
- The context must always be viewed from the perspective of the disability groups being served by the AbilityOne Program

Next Mr. Miller discussed the philosophy of the QWE to stay in alignment with the AbilityOne Strategic Plans. The QWE Initiative hopes to develop a "win/win" to benefit the employees and the NPAs and to have the CNAs to lead by example. Mr. Miller said it is fully expected that all agencies will participate over the next three years.

Next, Mr. Miller outlined some potential outcomes for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities which included: improved productivity; improved morale and satisfaction, increased wages and benefits, and many others. The NPAs are also expected to benefit from potential outcomes such as a more inclusive work environment, improved ability to recruit, improved employee career paths, and more.

The next part of the discussion focused on performance measurement and the key measures that would be used. Mr. Miller advised on different measurement strategies and discussed the framework based on the Malcolm Baldrige process evaluation factors. The four factors used to evaluate this process are: Approach, Deployment, Learning and Integration. Mr. Miller defined each factor.

There was a detailed discussion on QWE Practice Guidelines and then an analysis on the implementation process. The QWE Steering Group identified 69 best practices.

Mr. Robert Hanye, CEO of Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment of Binghamton, NY served as the Vice Chair of the QWE. Mr. Hanye thanked the Committee and the CNAs for allowing him and his peers to participate in the process. He said there was over 100 years of experience shared and the whole initiative was a mission-directed collaboration. Mr. Hanye thanked Ms. Ballard for her leadership.

QWE Implementation will take on a phased approach over the next three calendar years, so that by the end of 2012, all AbilityOne NPAs will have adopted or be actively engaged in the process of adopting the core elements of the Practice Guidelines established by this initiative. Mr. Miller discussed the implementation schedule and what is expected to happen each year.

Some of the resources that will be available to the CNAs include: QWE Practice Guidelines, a QWE Implementation Guidebook, and reference guides. The plan will be CARF (the Commission on Accreditation for Rehabilitation Facilities) accredited and ISO certified.

Mr. Houghton welcomed former Chair of the Subcommittee, Neil Romano. Mr. Houghton said he was very impressed with how the process started and where it is today. Mr. Houghton asked Mr. Miller to share his experience working with the QWE group. Mr. Miller said although he has a very busy schedule, he felt it was his duty to participate. He said he felt a little trepidation with the magnitude of the task but felt confident that with the help of his NISH sponsor, Ms. Van Allen, he would be up to the challenge. He was impressed that Ms. Ballard and the other leadership attended the meetings.

Mr. Hanye said he was intrigued by the bottom up process and he said the agencies were the driving force behind the mission. Mr. Omvig said he was very proud of what had been accomplished and said this was a mission from the heart. He wanted to commend everyone publicly for their hard work and named the members of the QWE and the sponsors. Mr. Omvig commended Mr. Romano for his steadfastness and said he appreciate all his hard work. Mr. Omvig said he became of the program 41 years ago. In 1969, some employees were making twenty-five cents an hour, while the Federal minimum wage was \$1.25 per hour. Mr. Omvig said this has been a marvelous culmination of a lot of hard work and the future looks bright for future AbilityOne employees. He once again thanked the Steering Group.

Mr. Houghton said the members would affirm or disaffirm the Special Vote Letter adopting the guiding principles and best practices for a QWE. Mr. Omvig voted to affirm. Mr. Claude voted to affirm. Mr. Poleo voted to affirm. Mr. Kelly voted to affirm. Dr. Anthony voted to affirm. Mr. Laird voted to affirm. Mr. Houghton voted to affirm. Ms. Phifer tallied the seven votes and stated there was a unanimous vote in the affirmative.

Mr. Houghton announced that he has several presentations to make for those who were most instrumental in working with the QWE. Mr. Omvig joined Mr. Houghton to present the awards. First, Mr. Houghton presented a plaque of appreciation and the inaugural Committee AbilityOne Chairperson's coin to Mr. Neil Romano. As the Chairperson of the Communications and Customer Satisfaction subcommittee, Mr. Romano along with his staff from the Office of Disability Employment Policy, invested a lot of time and energy to get the QWE initiative launched. Mr. Houghton thanked Mr. Romano for his steadfast determination.

Next, Mr. Omvig, recognized the two CEOs who led the QWE efforts. Mr. Miller and Mr. Hanye were presented with plaques of appreciation for their commitment to the QWE initiative. Mr. Houghton thanked all the individuals who agreed to serve on the steering group. The steering group met several times each month and worked tirelessly to get their goals accomplished. Mr. Houghton named each member:

Mr. Jerry Bettenhausen, CEO & President  
Work Services Corporation  
Wichita Falls, TX

Rich Gilmartin, Vice President, Vocational Services  
Lakeview Center, Inc.  
Pensacola, FL

Lou Moneymaker, CEO  
BOSMA Industries for the Blind  
Indianapolis, IN

Steve Perdue, President & CEO  
Grand Traverse Industries  
Traverse City, MI

Deb Russell, Manager  
Outreach and Employment Services  
Walgreens  
Deerfield, IL

Bobby Silverstein, Counsel  
American Congress of Community Supports and  
Employment Services, ACCSES  
Washington, DC

Robin Usalis, CEO  
Clovernook Center for the Blind  
Cincinnati, OH

Lastly, Mr. Houghton recognized the three staff sponsors who led the collaborative staff support, Ms. Van Allen, Ms. Hartley and Ms. Zeich.

### **III. Executive Director Report**

Ms. Tina Ballard, Executive Director, reported that Administrative Memorandum No. 7 and No. 8 have not been updated in 12 years. She said after a review was conducted by the Executive Staff, it was determined that changes needed to be made.

Ms. Ballard recommended that the two memoranda be consolidated into a single memorandum and be adopted by special vote. Mr. Anthony Poleo, DLA, after reviewing the memorandum, asked if it was mandatory to have nominations from the floor. Mr. Dennis Lockard, General Counsel, responded that it is more of a historical precedent to accept nominations from the floor. Mr. Claude agreed that it was standard in most not for profit companies.

Mr. Robert Kelly, Private Citizen, expressed that he felt this would be a significant change and it should be looked at later in the year so that the Committee is not compelled to rush to judgment. Ms. Ballard disagreed and explained why she thought it was pertinent to move in a timely manner. Mr. Paul Laird, Department of Justice, recommended that the issue be revisited again when there is a full Committee. Ms. Ballard said that the current memoranda required establishing a nomination committee this month to identify a complete slate of nominees for elections in mid-2010. Due to the small number of current Committee members, she questioned the rationale of revisiting this issue when there is a full Committee. She emphasized that it could be months before a complete list of names would be approved by the President. Mr. Laird clarified his position and said he agreed with Ms. Ballard's stance, but wanted the memo to be briefed again once the full Committee is in place.

Mr. Poleo proposed that the language under C(7) be changed from, "Provide general administrative direction to the Executive Director..." to "Provide strategic intent to the Executive Director..."

Mr. Omvig made a motion that the memo be approved with the incorporation of the change suggested by Mr. Poleo. His motion received a second from Mr. Laird. Ms. Phifer tallied the votes and there were six approvals and one vote of disapproval.

Next, Ms. Ballard expressed the need to have consistency of Committee leadership. She indicated that the current term of the Chair and Vice Chair ends in mid-2010. Due to the very low number of current members on the Committee, she expressed concern that consistent leadership can be achieved. Under the just approved Administrative Memo No. 8, terms of office can be extended based on emergencies or extenuating circumstances. She expressed that she discussed the issue with Mr. Houghton and Mr. Omvig and they had agreed to serve one year beyond their term appointments if approved by the Committee. There was a discussion about the major revisions of the new memorandum. Mr. Poleo made a motion that, in accordance with the new memorandum, extenuating circumstances existed that permitted extending the term of office of the current Chair and Vice Chair for one year beyond their normal term appointed and he so moved to do so. His motion received a second from Mr. Laird and the motion was adopted by unanimous vote.

Mr. Omvig commended the Committee and the leadership of Mr. Houghton. He said it would be his privilege to continue to serve as Vice Chairperson. Mr. Houghton also thanked the Committee for their support and confidence in him to continue to serve as Chairperson.

#### **IV. Subcommittee Reports**

##### **Stewardship Subcommittee**

Mr. Laird departed the meeting early, so Mr. Lou Bartalot, Committee staff, reported on the Stewardship subcommittee. The first objective of Stewardship is to have 100 percent of AbilityOne-participating nonprofit agencies achieve full compliance with all statutory and regulatory requirements by 2014. Mr. Bartalot said the number of nonprofit agencies with overall direct labor ratios below 75 percent was 13 in 2009, an increase from 11 in 2008. He said there were two agencies that were below ratio for multiple years. The first one is Goodworks, the agency that has had problems because of unforeseen circumstances, namely

Hurricane Katrina. Since Goodworks has already made numerous presentations to the Committee, and has followed their corrective action plan and their direct ratio since September has been above 75 percent. As a result, he recommended that they do not need to come again in March. Mr. Bartalot said the other agency is Abilene Goodwill and they have decided to leave the program at the end of the month.

Mr. Bartalot said the Committee staff will have two additional Compliance staff this year. A total of 47 agencies were visited last year. The Compliance team started making visits in March and Mr. Bartalot trained Ms. Amy Jensen and Ms. Cheryl Hopper to make compliance visits.

The second objective is Advocacy for the Program. Mr. Bartalot said that the subcommittee was struggling to come up with quantifiable measures, but is continuing to work on the issue.

### **Employee and Customer Satisfaction Subcommittee**

Mr. James Omvig, Chair of the Employment and Customer Satisfaction subcommittee, thanked his subcommittee members, the former subcommittee Chair, Neil Romano, and the QWE Steering Group. Mr. Omvig applauded the work of the Executive Sponsors: Ms. Kim Zeich, Committee Staff, Ms. Angela Hartley, NIB, and Ms. Barbara Van Allen, NISH. Mr. Omvig said the QWE Plan is consistent with the January 2009 memorandum that originally launched the initiative.

Mr. Omvig asked Mr. Robert Hartt, Committee staff, to update the Committee on the other activities of the subcommittee. Mr. Hartt advised that the subcommittee was proceeding with work plans for conducting employee and customer satisfaction surveys in fiscal years 2010 and 2011. He also indicated that work was underway to develop consistent listening post questions to obtain feedback at compliance visits, conferences and forums.

### **Employment Growth Subcommittee**

Admiral Michael Lyden, Chair of the Employment Growth subcommittee discussed the two objectives his subcommittee is working on. The first objective is to increase employment opportunities and quantity of work for employees by two percent per annum for products and seven percent per annum for services through 2014. Admiral Lyden said the internal objective is to increase employment. Admiral Lyden said there are two measures under employment growth. The first measure is the number of direct labor employees and the direct labor hours worked. The second measure is the number of indirect labor employees and indirect labor hours worked.

Next, Admiral Lyden discussed the quantity of work (hours). He said the Contract Management closeout strategy has attributed to continued growth. Admiral Lyden said the indirect labor hours are not readily captured. He said 2010 will act as a baseline. Admiral Lyden compared products to services and said that the services side is a challenge. Two percent is standard in regards to products. There has been a percentage change in service hours. In most years, the hours were below seven percent. The subcommittee is discussing ways to stretch the goal for the number of direct labor hours.

Mr. Chamberlin commented on some of the problems and solutions regarding the projects NISH is pursuing. Admiral Lyden said there was a robust discussion during the last meeting. Mr. Kelly asked if Admiral Lyden thought the objectives were too difficult. Admiral Lyden responded that no, as they are embedded in the business plans. Mr. Claude questioned if the seven percent growth in services goal is truly a stretch goal. Mr. Chamberlin responded that NISH is shooting for a higher goal than seven percent for services. There is a goal to double the jobs by 2015.

The next topic for discussion was the second objective regarding AbilityOne goals in all federal agencies represented on the Committee. Admiral Lyden mentioned a growth profile of various government agencies. The subcommittee will use the growth profile and AbilityOne sales information to select initial agencies to target.

### **Business Excellence Subcommittee**

Mr. Tony Poleo, Chair of the Business Excellence subcommittee, commended the Committee staff, NIB, and NISH for the great progress they have made. Mr. Poleo said the objective of the subcommittee is to improve critical business practices that impact the AbilityOne program and stakeholders. The subcommittee hopes to accomplish this by improving the PL end-to-end process, improving the fair market price and aligning the CNA Fee methodology to strategic goals of the AbilityOne Program.

Mr. Poleo said the review of the CNA Fee Methodology is on track. There was a discussion about the lean team's progress. He said the corrective action phase has not been addressed yet. The subcommittee is trying to determine the cycle time. The current process is 600 days and all agreed that was not the right number. Mr. Poleo commended everyone that worked on the lean process.

Mr. Poleo said the Committee has to improve in order to be competitive. The CNA Fee utilization should demonstrate alignment to the core strategic goals of the AbilityOne Program and the performances and outcomes should tie together with the AbilityOne Strategic Plan. Mr. Poleo thanked everyone who was involved in the lean project.

With consideration of the time, Mr. Houghton asked Mr. Lou Bartalot to postpone his annual program results presentation until the March meeting.

The Committee members were given the 2010 Committee Calendar of Meetings. Mr. Omvig said he would have a conflict on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, which is the current scheduled date, and would like the Committee to consider moving the meeting to July 15<sup>th</sup>.

## **V. CNA Reports**

### **NIB**

Mr. Kevin Lynch, President and CEO of National Industries for the Blind (NIB), commended the subcommittees for their outstanding work. He said it is long overdue to have a tracking system to collect information.

Mr. Lynch discussed the recent work of the NIB Board Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) which engaged in an intense focused process to address the non-employment rate of 70% for people who are blind, which has not been reduced for a long time. He said the SPC addressed the lack of actionable information about people who are blind and their career aspirations. As a result, NIB is establishing a new position, Director of Strategic Intelligence, and also working on external funding resources. Mr. Matt Wisler will take on this role which main objective is to identify need for and help develop the right type of employment opportunities for blind people lacking them.

Next, Mr. Lynch mentioned that NIB would hire two rehabilitation engineers to work with NPAs to modify jobs, develop best practices and improve productivity. In addition, a director of workforce development will also oversee QWE implementation and a director of Learning and Development will take a comprehensive look at the Business Leaders Program, Contract Management Support program as well as internal training for NPAs and develop a strategic plan to address training needs.

Mr. Lynch said NIB is undertaking a major IT improvement project – the Enterprise System Initiative, which includes several phases to be completed over a two-year period. Mr. Lynch informed the Committee that the CMS Pilot Project is going very well and the Army wants to roll out contracts in July 2010. Mr. Omvig asked how many blind people are in training. Mr. Lynch responded that there are 100. Lastly, Mr. Lynch thanked Ms. Ballard and the Committee staff for their support on the Advanced Combat Shirt (ACS) project, which is being developed collaboratively with NISH and will create 90 jobs for NIB agencies alone.

## **NISH**

Mr. Robert Chamberlin, President and CEO of NISH, also commended the subcommittees on their accomplishments, and applauded the QWE Chairs for their efforts.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is July 26, 2010. In celebration of this important anniversary year, NISH presented Mrs. Yoshiko Dart with NISH's President's Award for the outstanding leadership, service and advocacy for people with disabilities provided by Mrs. Dart and her husband Mr. Justin Dart. Mr. Dart, known as the Father of the ADA, died on June 22, 2002.

Mr. Chamberlin said the good news is that people with disabilities have made many strides over the past 20 years. Mr. Chamberlin stated that the not so good news is that the Army is suffering major cutbacks in dollars. According to Mr. Chamberlin, these cutbacks will have a major impact on the AbilityOne Program. He said Goodwill in Savannah, GA has reduced the work hours of 53 people. Thirteen people have already been laid off and they are expecting about 20 more. Ft. Gillam may lose 45 people with disabilities. Mr. Chamberlin said NISH had a similar experience with the Air Force and they are trying to work with the Army, but the impact can already be felt.

Next, Mr. Chamberlin discussed the Request for Information NISH issued to identify nonprofit agency interest and capabilities in the Total Facilities Management line of business.



Lastly, Mr. Chamberlin announced that the 2010 NISH National Training and Achievement Conference will take place on May 24-26 in Anaheim, CA.

**X. New Business**

Mr. Lynch announced that during the January Board Retreat, Ms. Karen Walls was elected as the new President of the NAEPB. Ms. Walls is the President of Midwest Enterprises for the Blind, Inc. in Kalamazoo, MI.

After determining there was no further business, Mr. Houghton adjourned the meeting at 12:15 pm.

## **List of Attendees – January 14, 2010**

### **Committee Members**

Ed Anthony	Department of Education
Abram Claude	Private Citizen
Andrew Houghton	Private Citizen
Robert Kelly	Private Citizen
Paul Laird	Department of Justice/UNICOR
James Omvig	Private Citizen
Anthony Poleo	Department of Defense/DLA

### **Nominees**

RADM Mike Lyden    Department of the Navy

### **Committee Staff**

Tina Ballard  
Lou Bartalot  
Robert Hartt  
Amy Jensen  
Kermit Jones  
Stephanie Lesko  
Dennis Lockard  
Nancy Myrick  
Angela Phifer  
Breck Richardson  
Joan Smith  
Edward Yang  
Kimberly Zeich

### **NISH**

Bob Chamberlin  
Vic Dennis  
Dennis Fields  
Elizabeth Goodman  
Jean Robinson  
Larissa Timmerberg  
Martin Williams

### **NIB**

Dan Abatemarco  
Steve Brice  
Angela Hartley  
Scottie Knott  
Kevin Lynch  
Arun Shimpi  
Matt Wiesler

**Government Representatives/Staffers**

Susan Burrows	U.S. Department of the Navy
Christopher Button	U.S. Department of Labor/ODEP
Lisa Faleski	U.S. Department of Agriculture
Shaun McGill	U.S. Department of Labor/ODEP
Sue Picerno	U.S. Department of Labor/ODEP

**Others**

Barbara Barnard	ORD Industries
Ellen Brown	Goodwill
Adele Gasparro	ORC Industries
Mark Hall	
Robert Hanye	Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment Binghamton, NY
John Miller	Goodwill Industries in Southeastern Wisconsin
Sharon Omvig	Private Citizen
Larry Povinelli	
Laura Walling	
Woody Van Walkenbergh	Goodwill
Bernard Werwie	